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## JAPANESE CHARACTERISTICS



BY

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The Executive Committee of the Association for International Conciliation wish to arouse the interest of the American people in the progress of the movement for promoting international peace and relations of comity and good fellowship between nations. To this end they print and circulate documents giving information as to the progress of these movements, in order that individual citizens, the newspaper press, and organizations of various kinds may have readily available accurate information on these subjects. A list of publications will be found on page 15.

## JAPANESE CHARACTERISTICS

In the present condition of the Eastern world it is highly desirable that the American people, and indeed, all the Occidental peoples, should come to know well the qualities and ambitions of the Japanese people. Having had the opportunity of observing carefully a succession of intelligent Japanese students at Harvard University, a succession which began in 1871-2, having known personally several of Japan's leaders since the Restoration of 1868 and many Americans who have served in Japan as teachers, and having recently had a favorable opportunity of talking with a considerable number of Japan's leading men on Japanese social conditions, industries, and government policies, I desire to put my observations on the Japanese at the disposition of thinking Americans, through the medium of the American Association for International Conciliation.

The Japanese are, as a race, distinct from other Orientals. They are unlike the Chinese, the Siamese, the Javanese, or the natives of India. Their physical, mental, and moral characteristics distinguish them from other Oriental races; their social and political history has been different; and since the Restoration of 1868 they have taken on Western civilization with a rapidity and a skilful adaptation to their own civilization which no other Oriental nation has ever approached. They have seized upon Occidental law, economics, and science, and made all the modern applications of these knowledges with marvellous alacrity and intelligence. They have built up a great system of public instruction from the primary school through

the university, at first in the higher grades with the aid of many foreign teachers, now replaced for the most part by native teachers. They have learned and put into practice all the Occidental methods of warfare on sea and land, and have proved that they can face in battle not only the yellow races, but the white. They possess in high degree intelligence, inventiveness, commercial and industrial enterprise, strength of will, and moral persistence.

With extraordinary rapidity the Japanese have introduced into their country the factory system, and all the instrumentalities and means for developing large-scale manufactures, transportation systems, and the financial institutions, such as banks and insurance companies, which make possible great industrial developments. They have built many railroads, though not enough, many street railway lines, bought and built admirable steamships for both freight and passenger traffic, established hundreds of banks, introduced into the country insurance of all kinds; and all these industrial and commercial institutions they conduct and operate with astonishing success. Great steamship lines run both east and west from Japan, and far to the south. In all these vast undertakings the Japanese have had the advantage of copying models or types already in existence among the Western nations; but they have shown remarkable capacity not only in imitation, but in adaptation of Western institutions and processes to Japanese conditions. In adopting the Western methods of taxation and government finance, they have in some instances bettered Western practice. For example, when the Japanese government decided to substitute the gold for the silver standard, the Japanese leaders studied carefully the experience of the United States in going from paper and silver money to gold, and accomplished in two years a difficult process

which in the United States took thirteen years. Japan learnt quickly and easily the art of borrowing money heavily for war purposes, and also appreciated much sooner than many a European nation has done that she had got to the end of her tether in borrowing. Her factory system is feasible at present, but will soon become impossible; for the labor is done under conditions which do not now exist in any other civilized country, and indeed, have not existed in Europe since the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The Japanese are well aware that the conditions of labor in their factories must be ameliorated, with a resulting increase in the cost of their manufactured goods, and have already adopted laws for the regulation of hours and conditions of labor, the execution of which they have postponed for a few years.

The Japanese have seized upon all the applied sciences developed in Europe and America during the last century, particularly on the sciences subsidiary to medicine and surgery, have established all the means and instrumentalities of preventive medicine throughout the Empire, and have created a well-trained profession of medicine. Their point of view in respect to the prevention of disease and premature death is that of efficiency. They fight cholera, smallpox, bubonic plague, beri-beri, and all the ordinary contagious diseases, in order that the working efficiency of the population may be maintained at a high level. Wherever the government has under control large numbers of men and women, as, for example, in the army, the navy, the police force, the public hospitals, asylums, and convalescent stations, they force changes of diet on the persons under authority. For instance, they mix barley with the rice, or they put more meat or fish into the rations issued. Beri-beri was driven out of the navy by compulsory changes in the rations, whereby

the men got more protein substance in their food. In all such government activities the motive is to increase the efficiency of the army, navy, police, or laboring population. In all their dealings with contagious disease they enforce strictly all the measures of isolation and segregation which the experience of the world has proved efficacious, and they use with the utmost intelligence all the means of prevention, and also all the remedies or means of cure which experience in any part of the world has shown to be effective. These practices prove great intelligence not only in the government, but also in the common people as a whole; and the results of their practices in preventive medicine, in their hospitals and dispensaries, and in their treatment of private cases have more than equalled that of any Occidental nation. Considering that it is only forty-five years since the profound changes in Japanese government and society began, the achievements of the race are nothing short of marvellous. They prove beyond question that the Japanese possess as a race fine physical, mental, and moral endowments. Their dominant sentiment is an intense patriotism, in which pride, loyalty, and love are ardently united. Are they, then, a formidable and dangerous addition to the competing national forces of the world? Is their demonstrated strength dangerous to the peace of the world and to the white race?

The Japanese are not a warlike people, in spite of the fact that they have waged within a few years two wars in which they took the part of invaders. The war with China and the war with Russia were both in reality defensive wars. Over against Japan on the continent of Asia two huge nations, Russia and China, are in possession of immense territories. Bitter experience had satisfied the Japanese leaders that Japan would not be safe at home on her islands, if Korea

and Korean harbors were in the hands of either one of her immensely powerful neighbors. In those wars the common soldier's motive was an intense patriotism—not love of glory or a natural love for fighting, or a desire for new conquests and possessions.

The Japanese are not a numerous people. They number not more than one-ninth part of the Chinese population, or more than one-third of the population of Russia, and less than one-half of the population of the United States.

They are a homing people. They are commercially adventurous, and will travel far and wide as peddlers, or in search of trade or work; but they are not colonists. The Japanese government has had great difficulties in inducing Japanese to settle in Formosa; and at the present moment it has a similar difficulty in Korea, although the Korean climate resembles that of Japan. A hot climate the Japanese dislike. They would have no more use for the Philippines than Americans have. If a Japanese trader makes money in a foreign country, he will take his family and his money back to Japan as soon as he can. Under favorable conditions, climatic, industrial, and social, a few Japanese might really settle in a foreign land, become naturalized, and let their children lose connection with Japan; but they would be exceptional persons.

When the Japanese go abroad on business, they do not intermarry with women of the foreign races. At home or abroad, they keep their race pure, thus affording a surprising contrast to the white race when in foreign parts. The inexpedient crossing of different races will not be promoted by the Japanese in any part of the world.

The desire for children in a Japanese family is intense. The women are as a rule fecund, and all mothers nurse their babies. Milk-producing animals



having been scarce, the artificial feeding of infants has been practically unknown. The declining or 'disappearing' family is not a common phenomenon in Japan, as it is in France, England, and the United States; a fact which is evidence that the general conditions of life in Japan are now more favorable to the building up of a strong, enduring, and achieving nation than they are in the Occidental countries mentioned. In short, their present civilization is more likely to endure by the century, now that it can defend itself against attacks from without, than the civilization of several Occidental nations. No matter what the intellectual achievements of a nation may be, they will all be lost as time goes on, if the physical bases of the national life cease to be wholesome, and natural child-bearing declines through the effects of vice or any sort of physical degeneracy. No Oriental race seems to suffer as the white races suffer from the alcoholic temptation; and the venereal diseases do not seem to have been so destructive among any Oriental people as they now are among the white races. The dangerous opium habit is Chinese, but not Japanese. The Japanese nation is not threatened, as the American people are, with increase in the number of defectives in mind or body who breed their like without restraint. The physical and moral conditions of Japanese society have not developed this hideous evil, to the existence of which the Occidental nations have only lately awakened. The Japanese have had no such legislation as that which in Massachusetts requires defective children, who have been kept under guardianship until they are twenty-one years of age, to be set free from all restraint at that age, with the general result that the discharged young people fall at once into vicious ways, from lack of experience and self-control.

The Japanese are enterprising industrial people and



keen traders, but at the present day they can be satisfactorily dealt with by foreigners with no greater precautions than are usually taken by prudent men of business in dealing with Occidental peoples. This fact is one of the results of universal education in Japan; for under the Japanese feudal system the trader held the lowest place in the social structure, because in the Japanese view he was not a producer. Good business ethics and particularly the sanctity of contracts have now been taught in all Japanese schools for more than a generation; and the Imperial Government has recognized the importance of commerce and trade in modern civilization by conferring titles and other distinctions on successful and serviceable business men. The American agents in Japan of large American corporations, such as the Standard Oil Company and the Singer Sewing Machine Company, declare without reservation that the Japanese are just as satisfactory people to deal with as the Americans. Casual tourists, who see nothing of the Japanese except in the hotels and in the few shops for foreigners which they visit, sometimes get the impression that much chaffering is necessary in order to obtain Japanese wares at proper prices; but this is not a characteristic habit of Japanese dealers among themselves, and even the foreigner will find it easy to discover in any considerable Japanese city or town shops where the prices are just as fixed as they are in American department stores, and are equally plainly marked on the goods offered for sale. There has long been current among foreigners resident in the Orient the statement that the Chinese are honest, and the Japanese dishonest, and that the Japanese do not trust each other, but employ Chinese cashiers and accountants in their banks and shops. The fact is, that there is not a Chinese cashier or accountant in any one of the hundreds of banks in

Japan. From top to bottom, the employees in Japanese banks, insurance offices, and all considerable mercantile offices are Japanese. It is many years since there was any foundation in fact for the saying common among American and English merchants in the East, "You may sell anything for future delivery to a Chinese, but nothing to a Japanese." Large business in Japan, as everywhere else in the world, is done on credit, and involves being trusted by a multitude of people, and also trusting a multitude. As a rule the mutual confidence is justified; but in Japan, as elsewhere, it is sometimes betrayed.

The Japanese are accused, chiefly by Occidental army and navy men, of intending to "dominate the Pacific," and to seize upon the insular possessions of other nations in the Pacific. There is no truth in these accusations. All Japanese statesmen and political philosophers recognize the fact that Japan is, and always will be, unable to "dominate the Pacific." No one nation in the world could possibly control the Pacific Ocean. For that purpose a combination of at least four powers having powerful navies would be necessary. Five or six powers combined, such, for example, as Great Britain, Germany, France, the United States, Japan, and Russia, or Italy, could do it, and at the same time "dominate" all the other oceans and seas. There are many who think such a control by combination would be desirable. All Japanese leaders recognize that it would be impossible for either Japan or the United States to send an army of a hundred thousand men with their baggage, munitions, animals, and stores across the Pacific Ocean in safety, although the fleet should be convoyed by scores of battleships and armored cruisers. The means of attack at night on a wide-extended fleet in motion, by almost invisible vessels, are now too many and too formidable. If by

miracle such an army should effect a landing on either shore, it could achieve nothing significant, unless promptly reinforced by a second and a third expeditionary army of equal size. The scale of modern warfare among civilized nations is too large for such remote expeditions.

Japan, being heavily burdened with debts incurred in carrying on her wars with China and Russia, could not borrow the money necessary in these days for waging aggressive war on a large scale at a distance—although she might fight successfully a defensive war at or near home. That she could doubtless do, as many other poor nations have done; but her financial condition is such that she will be prevented from engaging in offensive war for at least a generation to come. Moreover, the government and the industries of Japan need all the capital which Japanese merchants, manufacturers, and financiers can possibly accumulate during another generation, for the execution of public works and the expansion of industrial undertakings at home.

The commercial and industrial interests of Japan require peace with all the other nations of the world. There is no interest of Japan which could possibly be promoted by war with the United States or any other nation; and, conversely, there is no interest of the United States which could possibly be promoted by war with Japan. I was repeatedly assured last summer in Japan that such was the opinion of every Japanese statesman and man of business; and many of the gentlemen with whom I talked said that they had never met any Japanese political or commercial leader who was not of that opinion. The entire commerce between Japan and the United States is for the mutual advantage of each country; and the United States is Japan's best customer. War between the two coun-

tries is not to be thought of; and to suppose that Japan would commit an act of aggression against the United States which would necessarily cause war is wholly unreasonable, fantastic, and foolish, the product of a morbid and timorous imagination.

The right state of mind of Americans toward Japanese is one of hearty goodwill and cordial admiration. The Japanese should have every privilege in the United States which the "most favored nation" has; and that is all Japan wants from the United States. Her statesmen by no means desire any extensive migrations of Japanese people to other lands. On the contrary, they want Japanese emigrants to settle in Japanese territories. The Japanese home industries need all the labor that the population can furnish. The Japanese economists greatly prefer to the planting of Japanese capital or labor in foreign lands the recent methods of planting foreign capital in Japan, and the development of Japanese industries at home. This preference is natural and judicious, and it is noticeable that foreign capital is promoting in Japan the new kind of industrial development. When an American corporation, which is conducting at home a successful industry, sells its patents and methods to a Japanese body of capitalists, and then takes a considerable portion of the stocks and bonds of the Japanese company, American capital finds a profitable investment, the Japanese laborers remain at home, and the product of the Japanese industry is sold to advantage in the markets of the world.

Religious conditions in Japan cannot but be interesting to all the Occidental nations whose development has been strongly influenced by the Christian church. Christians of all sorts who take any interest in the Christian propaganda would like to know what sort of a reception Japan may be expected to give to

Christian dogmas, creeds, rituals, and ecclesiastical organizations, Greek, Roman, or Protestant, Anglican, Lutheran, Methodist, Baptist, or Unitarian. The government of Japan maintains an impartial toleration of all the religions which co-exist within the Empire. To the government Shintoists, Buddhists, Confucians, and Christians all stand on the same level, and are equally entitled to protection and freedom of worship. Shintoism is hardly a religion. Any Japanese will say of himself that he is a Shintoist, because he is Japanese. Shintoism gives a strong religious sanction to patriotism; and, like the Chinese Confucianism, expresses itself in veneration for the Emperor and for ancestors. In a Shinto shrine at Tokyo great paper rolls are deposited, which bear the names of the Japanese soldiers from that district who were killed in the war with Russia. Twice a year, in spring and fall, the Japanese nation, by the Emperor, the great state officials, the army, and the navy, goes to that shrine, and venerates the dead whose names are there recorded, because those young men died for their country before they had any children to venerate them. Therefore the nation with religious solemnities and military pomp takes the place of the children that never were born. On those semi-annual occasions the railroads of Japan offer round-trip tickets at greatly reduced rates to the relatives of the dead, that they may attend the ceremonies. The observance recalls Memorial Day in the United States; but the services are more religious in character and more impressive, because the nation performs them rather than the surviving comrades of the dead. That Shinto shrine is the barest possible room. There is no picture or image in it, and no furniture; and the object to which the short and simple ritual there used is directed is a silken screen of neutral tone on which there is no

writing. If such an observance be idolatrous, as some missionaries affirm, it is idolatry without an idol or even a relic.

The Japanese Buddhist finds the transition easy to the Roman Catholic Church, as regards both beliefs and religious practices, or observances. He got his Buddhism as an importation from a foreign country, so that he is not wholly unprepared to accept another importation; but it is impossible to interest a Japanese Buddhist, or a Chinese Buddhist, in the Christian dogmas and creeds which have had high historical importance in Europe and America. He can see no sense in them; and as to anchorites, healers, and saints he finds the Buddhist religion more amply equipped with them than the Christian.

The work of the American and European missionaries in Japan has been greatly hindered by the divisions in the Christian church, divisions attributable to differences in dogmas, creeds, or polity. The Japanese cannot understand such reasons for division, and they cannot be interested in them. If Christianity is to get a strong hold on the nation, it will be in some simple form which relies chiefly on the doctrines that God is love, that men are the children of God and therefore brethren, that the best way to serve God is to serve man, and that a man's habitual conduct toward fellowmen is the best available test of the practical value of his religious convictions.

There can be no doubt that the Japanese field is wide open for the advent of a simple, rational form of Christianity; and it is also clear that the educated Japanese are in search of religious motives adequate to keep the lives of their children pure and strong, and to inspire the nation with the love of truth, and the expectation of unlimited human progress toward universal justice and goodwill.



## LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

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